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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB, EUR/RUS, DS/IP/SCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/06/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [RS](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: WAY FORWARD ON RESTARTING
SURVEILLANCE DETECTION PROGRAM

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Richard E. Hoagland for reasons 1
.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Charge met with Foreign Ministry Americas Desk Director Serdar Bashimov on August 3 for a regularly scheduled weekly meeting. As he does at every opportunity, Charge raised the urgent need to restart the Embassy's Surveillance Detection Program that the government of Turkmenistan stopped in April.

¶2. (S) Bashimov said, "Never send another diplomatic note about this. The matter is closed. Now let's talk about something else." As he said this, he scribbled on a blank piece of paper, "Only president can solve."

¶3. (C) As usual, at the end of the meeting, Bashimov walked Charge outside the ministry to his car, where they conduct more sensitive business in the street.

¶4. (S) Bashimov recommended that EEB A/S Dan Sullivan raise restarting the Surveillance Detection Program when he meets with President Berdimuhamedov on August 14. "But you cannot press the issue. Simply touch it lightly and emphasize it is for the protection of your embassy, and your willingness to be fully transparent about it."

¶5. (S) Charge noted that Kyrgyzstan also had stopped the program, but is now allowing it to be phased in again. He asked why the program is so sensitive in the region. Bashimov replied, "Our friend told all the presidents it's part of your color revolution plans."

RECOMMENDATION

¶6. (SBU) We recommend A/S Sullivan consider a pull-aside with President Berdimuhamedov at the end of their meeting on August 14. We suggest the following talking points:

-- Mr. President, I have a very important but sensitive favor to ask of you. I would like to ask that you allow our embassy to restart its Surveillance Detection Program.

-- No matter what you may have heard, I want to assure you that this important program is solely for the protection of our own embassy and its employees, including citizens of Turkmenistan. It has no other purpose, either here or anywhere else in the world.

-- We will be totally transparent about it with your government, and would welcome representatives of your law-enforcement and security agencies to participate in it fully and at all times.

HOAGLAND